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## "Reviews and Information on Japanese Animation Software"

ISSUE 14 11/18/1990

This is the 14th in a series of files of comments and reviews of anime (Japanese animation) items that we have bought. Please direct all comments to us by E-mail or post us a message in the Forum. We also welcome any reviews, artwork, or comments you would like to have included in the next ANIME STUFF issue. Also please send us any comments about any incorrect information contained here. A correction will be placed in the next ANIME STUFF.

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I just wanted to thank all the folks who have written to me about ANIME STUFF over the past few months. It's amazing how many readers in Europe and Australia we have. Everyone seems to really enjoy our spouting off about our new anime finds. What's so shocking to me is the fact that many folks have this newsletter as their only source of information about anime. Yikes! It wasn't so long ago when I didn't know anything about this stuff myself. (It's been 5 years this Christmas since I first saw the MACROSS MOVIE.)

Anyway, please enjoy the latest issue. I've got to get back to reading the stack of manga and anime magazines I'm currently swamped with.

– Tom Mitchell

//////////////////////////////////GIF GRAPHICS NOTE\\

The GIF format graphics for this issue are presented in 640 X 400 monochrome format. All the graphics for this issue were prepared by Tom Mitchell. Here's a list of files:

AS14G01.GIF: The cover for this issue featuring a digitized picture of Madoka from Kimagure Orange Road.

AS14G02.GIF: A shot from the live portion of Bubblegum Crisis Hurricane

Live 2033 featuring a couple shots of Maiko Hashimoto singing the hit song SAY YES.

AS14G03.GIF: Another live shot from Hurricane Live 2033.

AS14G04.GIF: A shot of Kei & Yuri at the controls of the Lovely Angel from the new OAV DIRTY PAIR - THE FLIGHT 005 CONSPIRACY.

AS14G05.GIF: Madoka shouts her count of the 99.5 steps at Kyosuke from the first episode of Kimagure Orange Road.

AS14G06.GIF: A Kimagure Orange Road poster featuring Madoka digitized from the end credits to the KOR OAVs.

AS14G07.GIF: A portrait shot of Vampire Princess Miyu.

AS14G08.GIF: A shot of pop star Vision from Bubblegum Crisis 7 - Double

Vision.

AS14G09.GIF: Another shot of BGC 7's Vision singing the hit song SAY YES.

//////////////////KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD SPECIAL REVIEW SECTION\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\

A SUMMER SPENT IN SUMMERSIDE...

As far as my anime viewing and collecting went this Summer, I spent the most of my time completing my Kimagure Orange Road collection. From June to August I collected the entire TV series, saw the Orange Road movie, and began to follow the new OAV series. Not to mention filling out my CD collection with new discs of music from this show.

Now that I have seen the whole series, I can truly say that this is a very special show. Its mix of sentimental romance and wacky situation comedy is handled in a unique and skillful blend. And I found that the show boasted characters that I could not only identify with but care about too. The story of Kasuga Kyosuke's struggle to combine love and the perfect girl turns out to be a struggle with himself. And that lends a lot of depth and heart to this psychic family comedy that could have easily been another BEWITCHED or I DREAM OF JEANIE clone.

Now I can identify with all those fans who were so dissapointed when the show went off the air a couple of years ago at the end of the second season when the story was completed. Certainly, there hasn't been any TV anime like this since. And I wonder about the future of Kimagure Orange Road. The TV show pretty much followed the manga, and completed the story. Orange Road in its present OAV incarnation is going back and animating manga stories that were not used in the TV series. There can't be many of those left. And then there is the Orange Road Movie. A film that truly ends the present story. Will Orange Road continue beyond this? Certainly there are some things left unresolved...Madoka still doesn't know about the Kasuga families powers!

After seeing the entire show, and seeing so much of it over the Summer,

when I came to the end of it I felt like I was leaving old friends.

Good

art should keep the audience entertained, and great art should add personal involvement and emotion to the mix. Kimagure Orange Road was a great show.

- Tom Mitchell

KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD TV SERIES ON LASERDISC (VAP VIDEO, 70061-78 to 70072-78, 7,800 YEN EACH, CLV, MONO SOUND)

The entire 48 episode run of the Kimagure Orange Road TV series is now available on laserdisc from VAP video. Like Anime Stuff staff member Masaki Takai, I too have now collected all 12 laserdisc volumes of the show and I thought I would add some comments on my own about how VAP Video's laserdisc presentation of the show turned out. It's interesting to

note that the show was put out on laserdisc a year ahead of its being available on video tape.

It goes without saying that the show itself is now an anime classic.

But

as with the Dirty Pair TV series that VAP issued on LD, VAP falls short of

giving it the best treatment on LD possible. The show is presented on 12

laserdiscs that feature 4 episodes each. Chapter stops are used to allow

access to the "teasers" and opening titles, the first half of each episode, the commercial break and second half of each episode, and the closing credits. All the episodes are presented on the discs in order.

The video quality of the video transfer of the episodes is very good.

I

feel lucky that I was able to see the entire series on LD rather than on

tape or broadcast TV. The quality of the laserdisc format really shows off

the details...and the flaws...of the animation. My only real problem with

these LDs are that once again VAP video did not take advantage of digital

sound! Come on VAP! For some reason, VAP does not use digital sound on disc releases of TV shows. Perhaps they feel that the sound quality doesn't justify it. Hey, the less hiss and more dynamic range, the better!

Digital sound really helped the sound of the Macross TV series on laserdisc, so it's been a shame that we didn't get it on Dirty Pair and

now Kimagure Orange Road. Unlike VAP Video, TOHO Video has been doing a wonderful job with providing digital sound on their KOR Movie and OAV releases. So, other than my bone to pick with the sound, this laserdisc set is a really nice release. The very best way for a fan of Orange Road to collect the show. Oh, and I shouldn't forget to mention that each disc has an original pastel painting by Orange Road character designer Akemi Takada for its cover. Beautiful!

– Tom Mitchell

THE KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD MOVIE – "I WANT TO RETURN TO THAT DAY" (TOHO LASERDISC, TTL-2134, 9,249 YEN, LETTERBOXED, CLV, DIGITAL STEREO)

The TV series ended with Kasuga Kyosuke going back in time and setting up his destiny with Ayukawa Madoka. The final episode ends with Kyosuke and Madoka sharing their first kiss together. The end was brilliant and touching. But even as Kyosuke's love with Madoka is sealed with a kiss, there is still one big problem left unresolved: Hikaru!

The Kimagure Orange Road movie is a very hard film to watch for KOR fans as this is truly the end of the story. It's not the fact that it's the end of the story that is so hard to watch, mind you. No, it's how the story is ended that makes it tough to sit through. You see, this story resolves the love triangle between Orange Road's three main characters. But it doesn't just take the triangle apart; it tears it violently! Possibly taking their friendship with its destruction. Kasuga Kyosuke must make a decision between the two women he loves, and the results aren't pretty.

The film starts out with Madoka and Kyosuke heading off to a local college. As they walk through the campus, Kyosuke is startled to hear the voice of Hikaru! But it is not Hikaru. Rather it is another girl asking her boyfriend to come and see her in a play...The very same question that Hikaru asked him several months ago during the Summer. The camera pans around him as he flashes back, and we "return to that day" when Hikaru

told him that she was going to be in a school play...the black and white film turns to color and the story of Kyosuke's personal hell begins.

I will try not to give too much away about what happens in the film because there are so many surprises here for fans of the show. I would like to comment on the striking contrast in direction the film takes.

This

film is almost totally somber and serious. There are almost none of the

comedy elements from the TV series present here. There are none of the Kasuga family's telepathic powers used. The lecherous pair Komatsu & Hata

don't bug Kyosuke's sisters, although they still bug Kyosuke when they should be studying for college entrance exams. Kyosuke's sisters and other

relatives don't give him a hard time. Hikaru's tough-guy admirer Yusaku is

also gone. Has he given up beating up on Kyosuke and trying to win Hikaru's devotion away from him? And even the harried family cat Jingoro seems older, fatter, and more lethargic.

It's a hot Summer, and Kyosuke and Madoka are under a lot of pressure getting ready for college entrance "exam hell." To Hikaru, it's just another Summer, as she is a year younger in age. The tension is so palpable that you can tell that something is going to give. Kyosuke's life

is about to change, and those plans don't include Hikaru. It is only Madoka that he now has anything in common with.

The interesting and frustrating aspect of the TV series was the love triangle that teenager Kasuga Kyosuke has found himself in. Kyosuke was

just mad about the beautiful, talented, and mysterious Madoka. And he works hard to get next to her "kimagure" (capricious) heart. But along the

way he picks up the unswerving total devotion of Hikaru; a very cute and

emotional girl who is Madoka's best friend. He even begins to find a place

in his heart for her. And if it wasn't for Madoka he would even probably

love her as much as the love-blind Hikaru thinks he does. But in an unspoken promise, for fear that they might hurt Hikaru's delicate heart,

Madoka and Kyosuke keep their relationship secret. Buy the time we get to

the events in the movie, things have built up to the point that it would

crush Hikaru to learn of their love.

The interesting twist to the movie is that throughout her life Madoka has been Hikaru's most trusted friend and protector. And yet, I feel that if Orange Road has a villain, it would be Madoka for stringing Hikaru along like she does and hiding her feelings about Kyosuke. This is even more apparent when she leaves it up to Kyosuke to tell Hikaru, after they decide to bring things in the open. She never sees Hikaru again after that. And Hikaru suffers badly, unable to let Kyosuke go. She even tells him that she saw through their secret all along but still tried to win him over with her charm anyway. Kyosuke still has a place in his heart for Hikaru, but they are more than just friends and he makes his choice and tears himself painfully from her to be with Madoka. Thus their friendship breaks up, but it is not quite the end as they go their separate ways...

A lot of fans didn't like the tone and outcome of this film, and have thus written it off. But I enjoyed it thoroughly. I felt that the level of emotions, and the playing against audience expectations was was a brilliant and entertaining twist that is rarely seen in films today. It was a realistic end to an impossible and emotional relationship, and was far more daring a story than I would have ever imagined it would be. But like other beautiful and emotional anime films such as WINDARIA or GRAVE OF THE FIREFLY, it can be tough to watch. The KOR movie is quite an emotionally draining artwork.

Technically speaking, the animation is a cut above the TV series. As are most feature film translations of anime TV shows. The film also boasts quite a wonderfully engineered stereo soundtrack and a wonderful background music score. Among the best of the excellent music that KOR has produced. The laserdisc of the film is superb. It's presented in digital stereo sound with a "letterboxed" picture that preserves the full aspect ratio of the feature film.

For the Kimagure Orange Road fan, this film is a must-see! Or if you

enjoy a tragic love drama, well they don't get more gut-wrenching than this.

- Tom Mitchell

KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD OAV EPISODES ON LASERDISC: "I'VE TURNED INTO A CAT AND A FISH" (CAT # TTL 2157), "HURRICANE! HENSHISHOUJO AKANE" (CAT # TTL 2158), KOINO STAGE HEART ON FIRE! HARUHA IDOL" (CAT# 2164) (ALL FROM TOHO VIDEO, 4,944 YEN)

Presently new episodes of Kimagure Orange Road are being produced as an Original Anime Video series. Episodes produced for release on videotape and laserdisc. Like the last "Color Postcard" OAV series, this series continues to bring to the screen stories from the manga that were not used in the TV series. The nice thing about the current OAV series is that the animation and sound quality have been upgraded quite a bit. Particularly when compared to the TV level animation of the Color Postcard OAVs WHITE LOVERS and HAWAIIAN SUSPENSE. These new episodes are gorgeous looking and sound wonderful. We even have some new BGM to enjoy. And the stories themselves are very entertaining, although they do not advance the KOR storyline much.

The first new story, "I've Turned Into a Cat and a Fish" is a riot. One of the more wildly funny KOR episodes animated. In the story, Kyosuke's grandfather brings home an old magic rope with a very special power. If two living beings hold each end of the rope at the same time, it will switch their minds! Of course this little item is going to cause the Kasuga family a lot of trouble. And it does...mainly to Kyosuke of course.

Through a series of wild mishaps Kyosuke's spirit is first switched into the body of the family's pet goldfish and accidentally winds up at a goldfish sellers booth at a local fair. A fair in which Kyosuke was supposed to meet Madoka and Hikaru for a date. As his family tries to find the missing pet with Kyosuke's mind in it (you should see what happens



to  
Kyosuke's body at home with the goldfish in control!), Madoka and  
Hikaru  
buy Kyosuke at the goldfish seller's booth! The girls are dissapointed  
that Kyosuke didn't show up. Little to they know that they are  
carrying  
him around in a plastic bag full of water. All is not lost for Kyosuke  
though as he is able to get a candid fish-eye view of Hikaru's  
feelings  
for him when he is placed in a glass in her bedroom.

Using the family cat's (Jingoro's) sense of smell, they trace the  
goldfish down to Hikaru's house. They have the magic rope with them.  
They  
use their psychic powers to sneak into Hikaru's house after Hikaru  
leaves  
to see Madoka. But Jingoro's hatred for the goldfish causes another  
accident to happen and this time the rope lands on Jingoro and the  
fish!  
Now Kyosuke's mind is trapped in the body of the family cat! (Just  
imagine  
how Jingoro must feel being a cat trapped in the body of a fish!)

All the commotion in Hikaru's bedroom causes the sisters to leave with  
the goldfish but they must leave Jingoro behind...and soon Kyosuke as  
Jingoro is discovered in Hikaru's bedroom and chased out of the house  
by  
Hikaru's mom.

Running out of the house, Kyosuke literally runs into Madoka and is  
knocked out and covered with red wine that Madoka was bringing back  
from  
the grocery store. Madoka meets with Hikaru and they have a contest to  
have the cat decided who will get the cat overnight. Madoka ends up  
tricking Hikaru into letting her have the cat...Kyosuke, as usual  
can't  
decide between the two girls...and Kyosuke stays overnight with  
Madoka.  
Kyosuke gets a glimpse of Madoka as she readies herself for a bath  
that  
night. Meanwhile, his family starts a strange psychic ritual back home  
to  
draw Kyosuke's mind back into his body...

In the end Kyosuke saves Madoka from a gas leak in her house when the  
pilot light in the water heater burns out. She begins to reward  
"Jingoro"  
with a kiss! Will Kyosuke receive his first kiss with Madoka as a cat?  
Watch the episode for a funny surprise ending.

I thought the next episode, "Hurricane! Henshishouju Akane," was a little odd for its rather uneven ending. In this story, Kyosuke's Summer vacation is interrupted by a visit from his cousin Akane. Akane is trouble for Kyosuke for three reasons; her forceful & mischeivious personality, her psychic talents that include the ability to teleport and hypnotize people into thinking she is someone else, and the fact that she is a lesbian.

The first two-thirds of this episode is a comic chase as Akane falls in love with Madoka and schemes to get Madoka away from Kyosuke. After all she she's that Kyosuke has Hikaru and he's pretty mean to turn her down for a swimming pool date when he has plans to play tennis with Madoka. How can he treat such a cute girl that likes him that way?

So, all hell breaks loose at the local sports club and swimming pool as Akane pretends to be Kyosuke to get closer to ruin his relationship with her and to get Kyosuke closer to Hikaru.

This final third of this episode is very different in tone from the first parts. Madoka and Akane go on a date to meet Kyosuke at Club Mobeus. Madoka seems to be upset with Kyosuke and the days events and she lets herself get very drunk at the club's bar despite Akane's protests. (We know that Madoka can handle alcohol better than Kyosuke can, so she must have been drinking a lot!)

A group of guys had been watching Madoka and Akane at the bar and decide that now would be a good time to move in and molest them. They move in on the girls and capture Akane. Madoka is about to put up a fight but she is so drunk that she is defenseless, so she sees that they are threatening to hurt Akane and she begins to give up.

At the same time Kyosuke arrives in the bar and sees that the girls are in deep trouble. He shouts at the punks, but is caught by two of them who

were watching the stairs hidden. He is brought down and forced to watch as they are about to rape Madoka. Everything slows as we see the leaders hand reaching for Madoka's top about to expose her breasts. Kyosuke can't get free to save her so he has to make a decision to use his powers in public. He does, and his anger lets loose furious bolts of energy that shake the Bar violently. Everyone is knocked to their feet.

In the end, the thugs are arrested for messing up the place, and Madoka and Kyosuke are brought closer by Kyosukes bravery. But, does Madoka know about Kyosuke's powers or does she think like everyone else does that it was some freak earthquake or something? In the end though, Akane leaves with a new respect for Kyosuke.

The next story, "Koino Stage Heart on Fire! Haruha Idol," is the first episode of a multi-part story. As I write this, the second episode is out now but I have not seen it yet. So, I don't know how long this story goes on. This story is more of a romance comedy. As Kyosuke is taking a break from his studies, he sees posters around town announcing the fact that idol singer Mitsuru Hiyakawa is coming to town as part of a rock-band talent search contest. Kyosuke walks down the street and begins to daydream about what it would be like to be as famous as Hiyakawa, and how he must not have to worry about such things as schoolwork.

At the same time Hiyakawa is running from a group of his fans. He just about gets away, but bumps heads with Kyosuke. And of course, because of Kyosuke's psychic powers, they switch minds. And Kyosuke learns first hand what the life of an idol singer must be like. In the course of the story, both Kyosuke and Hiyakawa learn valuable lessons about themselves and the woman they love. I don't want to give too much away as it is a simple and sweet story. But it does open up a big problem for Kyosuke; What will Hayakawa do with the knowledge of what happened? I understand this is addressed in the next episode.

I thoroughly enjoyed the first three episodes of the new KOR OAV series.  
The stories were a lot of fun...and could be inserted almost anywhere in the TV series in terms of their continuity in the storyline. And the production values are excellent for such short OAVs. Each episode runs under 30 minutes. I understand that after the 2nd HEART ON FIRE episode that there are two more KOR OAVs coming out. I can't wait! I just wonder how many stories in the manga there are left to animate?

– Tom Mitchell

#### KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD SOUNDTRACK MUSIC ON COMPACT DISC:

KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD SOUND COLOR 1 (CAT# LD32-5049)  
KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD SOUND COLOR 2 (CAT# LD32-5056)  
KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD SOUND COLOR 3 (CAT# LD32-5067)  
KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD MOVIE : "I WANT TO RETURN TO THAT DAY"  
SOUNDTRACK  
(CAT# LD32-5084)  
KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD OAV BGM : MOGITATE SPECIAL (CAT# TYCY-5119)

One of the things that made me want to check out Kimagure Orange Road was our anime poll that we did in issue 10 of Anime Stuff. KOR shared most of the top honors right along with Bubblegum Crisis. And one category they were virtually tied in were the best music categories. I'd followed BGC since it first came out and really enjoyed its music. I had always wondered about Orange Road, but was too busy with other things to really check it out. But everyone's overwhelming response to the show in the voting got my curiosity up, and I proceeded to check it out. Now, of course, the show is one of my all time favorites. And I've been feeding my CD player a steady diet of the show's wonderful music all Summer long. It's some of the best soundtrack music I have ever heard. And certainly some of the best ever done for any TV series. I know what I'll be voting for in the next poll!

There are a lot of KOR albums out now, so I thought I would provide some comments on 5 of the best ones; the actual collections of soundtrack music. I would recommend all 5 of these albums to any music fan. And I

think that for the KOR fan, these are the 5 albums to have in your collection...

KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD – SOUND COLOR 1: This is the first volume of music from the TV show. And a good introduction to the "sound" of Orange Road.

The music here practically touches on all forms of popular music. Pop, Rock, Jazz...It is quite a varied and lively album! The standout cuts are

the lush pop songs by Kanako Wada, and KOR's opening theme song NIGHT OF

SUMMERSIDE, a bouncy pop song with nice vocal harmonies and guitar work.

This album features most all of the background music used in the early episodes of the show. My favorite of the TV soundtracks. (Listen to track

5, the MADOKA'S THEME sax solo. If you listen closely, you can hear a full

orchestra in the background! The mix with the sax and the orchestra together doesn't show up until Sound Color 3. Looks like both were recorded at the same time, with the orchestra taken out of the mix here.

But some of the sound leaked back in through the microphone on the sax!)

KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD – SOUND COLOR 2: Of the 3 TV series soundtracks, this one is the most quirky. Lush jazz and rock themes clash with silly

action and surprise themes. Although all of the music here is excellent,

my favorite tracks are ORANGE MYSTERY, a great follow up to NIGHT OF SUMMERSIDE with neat backing vocals, and the romantic BACK TO RED STRAW

HAT TIME, the theme heard whenever Kyosuke ponders his problems with Madoka. The music here mixes more of the music from the middle and later

portions of the TV series.

KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD – SOUND COLOR 3: This album features some of the more somber and lush instrumentals from the show. The wonderful Kanako Wada songs are also more introspective and romantic. The compositions here

are more technically sophisticated as well. (Sort of reminds me of the 3rd

volume of music from Bubblegum Crisis in that it is less playful and more

serious in sound and composition.) Again, the music here is a mix of BGM

from the 2nd and 3rd portions of the the TV series for the most part.

Presently this 1988 album is the last of the TV series soundtrack. Although there is enough music from the show not included on the Sound Color Series to do a 4th volume. I hope one is made! But this series of records covers most all of the major themes.

KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD MOVIE SOUNDTRACK - "I WANT TO RETURN TO THAT DAY":

This is the most sophisticated sounding of all the KOR records. A technically superb album! The KOR sound here changes, taking away the saxophone, and letting a vibraphone have the center soundstage! The instrumentals are mellow and romantic...with some Rock and Roll thrown in for your toes. Kanako Wada's vocals are just too damn romantic...she's incredible here! Next to KOR SOUND COLOR 1, this is my favorite KOR BGM.

KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD – MOGITATE SPECIAL: This album contains music from

the current OAV series. It boasts an outstanding new opening theme song

for the show called CHOOSE ME. And the piano is the featured instrument

here, which really sounds wonderful. Some of the other pop songs take some

time to warm up too though, I feel. Still, the music here is a cut above

most anything else!

- Tom Mitchell

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BUBBLEGUM CRISIS 7 - DOUBLE VISION (ON LASERDISC, TOEMI VIDEO,  
TOLA-1066, CLV, DIGITAL STEREO, 9,470 YEN)

I have a lot of mixed emotions about this latest BGC video. On one hand

this episode looked good, and sounded great. On the other hand, it did absolutely nothing to advance the BGC story which is in dire need of some

push before we get to the planned episode 13 and find the show's story has

not really gone anywhere since the first episode. Genom is as naughty as

ever. Another head villain gets away, a new boomer shows up and gets blasted, etc.

This episode is a continuation of sorts of the events in BGC episode 2.

As it turns out, the young girl Irene who was killed by Genom's lady boomers in the episode was the sister of the American female pop star named Vision. Vision is on a world tour. But this time out she is leading a double life. Using her tour as a cover, she is planning to avenge her sister's death when she gets to Japan. She plans to kill Genom's CEO Quincy.

Vision must know that Quincy doesn't show up in very many accessible places often, so she plans to kidnap a top Genom scientist in order to draw him out. It just so happens that she also has a wealthy family that made a fortune in high-tech science that is backing her in this venture with a technical crew and a spider-like boomer-crunching attack vehicle called the "Genki".

Her first attempt on the Genom scientist fails when she and her team are in Galveston, Texas. The spooked scientist gets back to Japan and hires the Knight Sabers, of all people, for protection. The Saber gals view this as an ideal chance to get closer to Genom in their own plans for destroying the evil men who run the company. In another hit attempt in Mega-Tokyo the Knight Sabers have their first run-in with Vision's Genki. In a stupid move on the Knight Saber's part, Priss is sent out alone to stop it and gets clobbered after a close fight. (Gee, two Knight Sabers might have beat the thing).

Now, Vision has her scientist and challenges Quincy to show himself in order to get the man back. Quincy accepts the challenge because he needs a test for a new bio-mechanical boomer called "Frankenstein" that he is building. On the day of the big fight set in the Floating City, the Frankenstein boomer kicks the Genki's tin butt, and Vision and her team are saved by the Knight Sabers. As it turned out the Quincy that showed up at the fight was once again an android copy. (I won't give away the rest of the ending...)

I left out a lot of detail in that short synopsis because there are a lot of interesting little surprises and well done scenes in the

episode,  
despite the go-nowhere story. I wonder about where the show is going because Priss was supposed to die, but fan popularity kept her alive. Vision was going to be a character to replace her. Now we've had Priss' character in emotional limbo for two episodes, and a new character that I'm sure none of the BGC writers know what to do with. Vision is a neat character, but there's no room for her now. Will this episode be a one-shot appearance for her? At least we got a couple of good tunes out of her. Oh well, Priss moves better on stage anyway, if we ever see her there again.

Now I think I know why BGC 8 which was planned to be released in September is nowhere to be seen. The phrase "writing yourself into a corner" comes to mind. (BGC 8 - SCOOP CHASE has now been set for release in the end of January.)

- Tom Mitchell.

URUSEI YATSURA TV SERIES LASERDISC SET (50 discs) \* Kitty Video  
KFLD-1001/KFLD-1050 \* Y300,000 \* 5116 minutes (85 hrs. 18 min.) \*  
Available only to members of KAC (Kitty Animation Circle)

My first reaction upon seeing the box the set came in was "Gosh, this thing is BIG!" Then I picked it up... A person could use this set to workout with, since weighs in at a hefty 46 pounds! This LaserDisc set has got to be one of the things an anime collector dreams of getting (I know I did! - grin). Upon opening the container it was shipped in, I was surprised to find not one, but two separate boxes delicately packed within styrofoam cushioning. Each box contains 25 LaserDiscs.

The cover artwork for each LaserDisc jacket is different and they are done by different artists. The artists that did the covers for the Urusei Yatsura LD set are: Akemi Takada, Hidetoshi Omori, Atsuko Nakajima, Yuji Moriyama, Takafumi Hayashi, Maaski Kannan, Asami Endo, and Setsuko Shibuichi. Most of the artwork on the covers I have not seen before. Some of the artwork, however, I have seen in back issues of "Animage" and "Animedia". I'm not sure if the artwork is the same as the previous UY set, but the artwork sure is nice!

Each disc varies in the number of episodes put on it. However, all of the discs are in CLV. There are anywhere from 1 to 8 episodes per disc (the disc with only 1 episode is the last disc, which is 26 minutes long). Unfortunately, the entire soundtrack was recorded in monaural, but then again most anime TV series (if not all) were



recorded with monaural soundtracks.

I haven't had time to watch all of the episodes yet (hey, there are \*218\* of them!). Maybe I'll just set aside 4 days straight to have a UY marathon...

– Patrick Miyard

DOMINION OAV SERIES – ACT IV (TOSHIBA LASERDISC, SF048–1639, STEREO, DIGITAL SOUND, 38min, 4,666 Yen)

As we left off, Leona and Bauku were pulled into the whirling blades of a sewage treatment plant. See AnimeStuff Number 12 for a synopsis of Dominion Act III.

Inside the treatment plant, Leona and Bauku are saved because of a transmitter on Leona's uniform. The machine detected heartbeats and shutdown the blades in the nick of time. Escaping from the treatment plant, they wander around the sewers. Suddenly, Leona and Bauku are ambushed by a squad of Red Commandos. With "The Innocent" in hand, the pair scramble to safety. They manage to escape the commandos with the help of a few well-placed hand grenades. Climbing out of a manhole, Leona and Bauku disappear into the city.

Meanwhile, under the sewers, the Tank Police and the Red Commandos are arguing about who let Bauku escape. Afterwards, Britten drives away in his tank, in tears. He tries to commit suicide but he decides not to shoot himself when Alu tells him that Leona has been spotted in the city.

In another flashback sequence, Bauku is back in the secret lab. The experiments are continuing. The data from the experiments are inscribed on a picture that ends up being "The Innocent". That's why Bauku is willing to give his life in order to save the painting. All of a sudden, the lab is attacked by armed troopers. The scientists are murdered and the whole lab is confiscated.

Inside a truck, the lab equipment including the human subjects are being taken to an unknown destination. Bauku regains consciousness and attempts to drink out a can taken from the lab. Inside the can is a clear liquid.

(It had something to do with the experiment?). As Bauku drinks, the truck makes a sudden stop. Bauku and the can fall out of the truck. The truck drive on. Bauku is left to survive in the city on his own.

Later, Bauku has set up his camp in a doorway. A lady drives up and tosses Bauku a bag containing a gun and a large sum of money. The police drive up later and beat and arrest Bauku for robbery. Bauku has no idea why this is happening to him.

Back in the present, Leona is studying "The Innocent". She notices that there is something behind the picture. Bauku explains that the "master data" of the experiment is inscribed in the picture.

As they talk, the leader of the Red Commandos in his helicopter gunship appears and demands that Bauku hand over the picture. From a nearby building, spotlights illuminate the Red Commandos and their gunships. Yunipuma and Annipuna announce themselves and Bauku's gang. As if that isn't enough, the Tank Police also drive up.

It's a three-way standoff. Leona picks an inopportune time to sneeze and all hell breaks loose. Bright lights and loud sounds follow and a full fledged war breaks out among the three sides. Leona with Bauku in tow, take off in a borrowed motorcycle. Two Commando gunships give chase.

Alu, in Bonaparte chases them also. Bonaparte manages to down on both gunships with some fancy driving.

Exhausted, Leona has trouble paying attention to the road and is almost crushed by an oncoming truck. They crash into a nearby fence. Conveniently nearby, feeding his chickens, is the Police Chief. The Police chief is surprised by Annipuma and is taken hostage. As Bauku and gang are preparing to head off to the secret lab, Leona begs that Bauku release the Bio-dongle still around her neck. Annipuma is surprised that Bauku would help the Tank Police. He gives Leona a spray that will release the Bio- Dongle.

– Albert Wong

THE VENUS WARS (ON LASERDISC, EMOTION VIDEO, BELL-255, 5,974 YEN)

Sometimes its as important to see a movie to find out why it failed to become a hit as it is too see the "blockbusters" and the "classics".

Two

of my all time favorite live-action films BLADE RUNNER and TRON were visually spectacular and innovative, but failed at the box office because

of deficiencies in direction, scripts, and marketing. Those films great

art and technical skill could not overcome the fact that they did not have

a story to attract more than a cult audience. Such is the case

Yoshikazu

Yasuhiko's latest film, THE VENUS WARS.

Several years in the future, the planet Venus is provided with conditions for terraforming by an icy comet the collides with the planet.

Over the following decades, mankind has created a new home on the planet.

Of course, he has also brought politics, and in time war.

The story centers around a group of motorcycle racers who fight for the

freedom of their nation as a commando style force and are soon conscripted

into their nations army. We follow them about as they make a game of war

with their skills only to be used and dissalusioned by the politics of their own nation while at the same time they help to destroy the forces of

the evil invading powers.

This film has a lot of problems on several different levels. The largest

of which is the story. For being set in such a possibly fantastic setting,

it is so dull and unimaginative. It is a straightforward, black and white,

predictable good and evil story. No twists and no real suspense...You can

see the deaths of the baddies and the happy ending coming a mile away. I

thought this was quite a dissapointing surprise for such an imaginative

artist and director like Yasuhiko (YAS). It's almost as if the man who nearly told us too much of a story in his epic adventure film ARION, answered his critics by telling a story that was too simple.

The characters in the film are the next problem. There are too many of them and they are under-used. The crew of the Killer Commando racing bike team are filled with stereotypes as well. But at least most of them are far more interesting than the bland hero of the film...a young man named "Hiro" of all things. We really don't know what motivates him to do the things he does. He's just a device. He has no depth. All we know is that he is a great motorbike rider and that he's generally pissed with the "government"...any government...for messing up the fun he was having as a racer. Truly a rebel in search of a cause. His motivation seems selfish. So, there is nothing there for us to feel for him. I really don't care if he lives or dies. He's a very lucky delinquent and that's all. At least in YAS' ARION, we had a hero that took charge and had real goals and perils to deal with. Hiro may look like Arion, but he is ever hardly in charge of anything. Hiro, it would seem, goes with the flow.

Even the background music to this film is bland. The famous Japanese background music composer Jo Hisaishi did the music for the film. But this time the score is generic action music with no real distinct character. In fact, I really felt that it sounded like a pale imitation to his wonderful soundtrack for ARION.

Before you think I totally hated this film, it did have two aspects that I thoroughly enjoyed. YAS's talent as an animator and character designer really shines through. The animation in this film is really gorgeous , and the character designs are pure YAS. Like my favorite films TRON and BLADE RUNNER, VENUS WARS has a lot of problems with story, direction, and characters, but gosh it sure looks great!

- Tom Mitchell

SOL BIANCA LASERDISC (NEC Avenue # N60L-13 , CAV, Y6,180, 55 minutes)

For those of you who enjoy movies of the "Gall Force" genre, then you'll most likely like "Sol Bianca." Sol Bianca is the name of a spaceship in which 5 girls (all sisters) travel in. The names of the sisters are: Fuebu, Eipuriru, Jyanii, Jyun, and Mei. They seem to be space pirates, because in the beginning of the video, it shows them raiding a ship and taking jewels, weapons, and clothing (and even a stowaway!). They find a boy, Rimu, amongst the items they took from another ship. The girls attempt to return Rimu to Tres, the planet he was headed to. While attempting to do so, Eipuriru, Jyanii, Jyun, and Rimu end up captured by a military dictator who has frozen Rimu's mother and practically enslaved his father. The girls finally get out with the help of Fuebu and they manage to rescue Rimu's parents from the destruction set forth by the military ruler. The end of the video shows the girls heading off into space in the Sol Bianca towards a familiar looking planet... There is an interesting section on the LaserDisc after the video. The disc puts the LaserDisc player (well, at least mine) into still-frame mode where you can view character designs, mecha designs, and miscellaneous sketches one by one. Also, included with the LaserDisc is a computer floppy disc with text files on "Sol Bianca." Well, even though it's an MS DOS disc, it's the Japanese version. If you don't have access to a NEC PC-9800 series PC, then you won't have much luck in reading the files (figures, huh? - grin).

- Patrick Minyard

CRYING FREEMAN OAV VOL 1&2 LASER DISC (CAT# LSTD00180, 4,800 YEN)

The new Crying Freeman OAV series is a technically superb new anime series that left me with some mixed reactions. This is one of the few times that I have seen an OAV series based on a manga where I have read the manga before seeing the film. Most of the time I end up going back and reading the manga if the anime based on it catches my interest. So, this

time I came into this OAV series armed with the knowledge of the story of the manga. And you know what? I wish I didn't read the manga, because is has clouded my judgment of how the OAV episodes work as stories on their own.

Crying Freeman is a wonderfully drawn and loosely plotted action manga created by two famous Japanese manga authors, Kazuo Koike, and Ryoichi Ikegami. It is the wild story of Yo, a young internationally recognized Japanese pottery artist who one day finds that he has become valuable to the Chinese mafia. They see him as the perfect candidate to become head of their crime organization, and

he is quickly pulled in against his will. And soon finds himself trained to be one of the world's most feared assassins. Working with his hands and feet in ways he never thought possible through intense martial arts training. His former life as an artist is now a "cover".

The manga is masterfully drawn in a realistic style, and features a story that is filled with sex, violence, wonderful characters, and subtle character development. The video features everything the manga has, except...well...the plot, and the character development.

The video is basically a "Reader's Digest" version of the manga. In the 100 minutes used in these first two episodes, it packs all the manga's visceral punch, but none of the depth. The manga didn't have a lot of depth to begin with, but what it had isn't here. But every nuance of the manga's sex and violence is retained and presented in superbly animated vivid color!

My only real complaint about the Crying Freeman video is that there is virtually nothing of Yo/Freeman's background and training shown. Hence none of his motivation or personal struggle shows through. I wonder how he must look to the audience seeing these videos who did not read the manga. I imagine that he must look like a very handsome human killing machine who for some unknown reason has the love and devotion of a beautiful young

woman named Emu, a fantastically trained body, some really neat toys, and a position of great power, but no freedom of his own. It does not add up how a pottery artist could have achieved all this, unless you go back and read the manga. The funny thing is, this story did not take long to set up in the manga, and had these two 50 minute episodes added another 10 minutes each they would have had plenty of time to tell the whole story.

Ah well, even if you haven't read the manga, this is still one of the most stylish and colorful action animes ever made. It not dull! And it's never tame. For the manga fan, these videos will work as a great visual synopsis to some key scenes from the manga. What the Crying Freeman videos do show from the manga is startlingly close, almost panel for panel, from the manga.

The quality of the laserdisc of these videos is excellent. Great disc quality combined with a superb video transfer is just the ticket for showing off the Freeman OAV's excellent artwork. The stereo soundtrack is average. Nothing startling about it's production or engineering. And the BGM for the series is not very distinctive. Just flat BGM wallpaper. I guess what they saved on the sound, they reinvested in the visuals.

- Tom Mitchell

MEGAZONE 23 PART III ACT I LASER DISC (EVE'S AWAKENING) (CAT# MAJ-1, 6,800 YEN) MEGAZONE 23 PART III ACT II LASER DISC (EMANCIPATION DAY) (CAT# MAJ-2, 6,800 YEN)

Megazone 23 is one of my favorite OAV series. Parts 1 & 2 were lively and exciting; full of great visuals, music, and action. It is also unique in that a different group of artists work on the production with each episode. The story and characters may be the same but, but the look of the episodes and character designs change. With good production values, MZ23 also became an OAV classic and set the standard for OAV production in the anime industry.

When we broke the story that there were new Megazone 23 episodes going into production last year, I was really looking forward to seeing them.

The production was going to feature character designs by one of my favorite character designers, Hiroyuki Kitazume. And the story would be set 200 years into the future. When ads and previews for the PART III episodes started showing up in the magazines, the excitement mounted due to the slick looking art and computer graphics featured in the ads. I got a hold of the soundtrack CD first, and it was wonderful and innovative!

It looked like this was going to be a wonderful new addition to the Megazone 23 saga for us fans. So imagine my disappointment when it turned out to be the most disappointing OAV production of the year! The two Megazone 23 Part III OAVs are terrible. Mostly ruined by extremely poor animation quality; frame rates so low you can count them at times, poor background paintings, VERY sloppy cell work. The cell painting is so bad that all the characters look flat with only one or two levels of flesh tone. You can see brush strokes in the cell painting of the mecha during the action scenes! Facial features are drawn without any depth and improper perspective. Kitazume's slick character designs are totally ruined by poor renderings. Truly a shock after the sumptuous animation and character work featured in Megazone 23 Part II!

The story itself is also very bland and could have been saved by good animation. But, instead it is made even worse by the poor production values. The story features a high-tech enclosed society centered around computer culture that has become repressed by the people who control the systems. The city is clean and enclosed, reminiscent of the city in the film LOGAN'S RUN. Everything about the story and the society in which it is set goes against the type of lives led by the characters who were left surviving at the end of part two. The reason that little handful of society was left alive was so that they would not create a repressive



society again. They were hand picked for this reason. And the kids left alive in part two were not all rocket scientists and brain surgeons. Do you really think they could have built such a high-tech society in two hundred years? Just a few generations? I don't mind the fact that the story was set so far into the future. That is a very exciting notion. But there is no sense of evolution on history presented. No real link to the past, except for the computer generated character EVE, who guides the new characters in revolution again, and gets shot into space in a senseless next faze of evolution called "Project Heaven". The story presents a lot of neat ideas; cyberspace games, and automated closets. But it's all form with no function. No attempt is really made to fit any of these things into the story effectively, or relate them to the past Megazone 23 history with more than a mention of what happened before.

The quality of the video transfer is also very poor. Everything looks duller than it should, and perhaps out of focus at times; just looks how the opening titles are barely visible on the screen! The laserdisc was JVC/VICTOR's first attempt at issuing laserdiscs after years of refusing to issue anything in the format in support of their own VHD format in Japan. The poor video quality is made even worse by poor disc quality. JVC has brought VHS video quality to laserdisc. If JVC still hates laserdiscs, they really show it here. It also makes me wonder how bad the video transfer must have looked on the VHS tape versions of the videos. It's interesting to note that the JVC/VICTOR logo is nowhere to be found on these discs or their jackets. The obviously are not happy with the fact that they've had to start pressing laserdiscs.

I have trouble recommending this whole mess to even diehard Megazone 23 fans. It is an insult to anime fans that such a major title as this received such cheap and sloppy treatment. A show like this truly makes you wonder about the health of animation in Japan.

- Tom Mitchell

BUBBLEGUM CRISIS MUSIC VIDEO - HURRICANE LIVE 2033 (ON LASERDISC,  
TOEMI  
VIDEO, TOLA-1070, CAV, DIGITAL STEREO, 4,800 YEN)

Yes, this video is a sequel to the first Bubblegum Crisis music video, called Hurricane Live 2032. The first video presented the early hit songs from the OAV series set to clips from the first 3 episodes. More importantly, the first video presented some new original animation in a short musical segment that illustrated how the Knight Saber girls got together.

Although the new 2033 video does not have any new animation, it does have an interesting surprise of its own. This time a few of the songs are presented live in concert by the women who do the voices for the characters in BGC. Although the girls are rather short on stage presence, they and their backup band sure sound good. It's an interesting change of pace to hear some of the BGC hits done live.

The selection of songs covers the hits from episodes 4 to 7. Probably the best tune has to be Maiko Hashimoto's live vocal of SAY YES. The song must have been pretty popular with the fans because it really got the live audience going the second they heard the first few bars. The tune is also the only tune that mixes the live performance with animated scenes of BGC 7's Vision character in concert.

If you enjoy the songs from Bubblegum Crisis, this disc is a lot of fun. But if you are not a fan of the show, you might be better off getting the CDs that feature a collection of the songs from the show since you'll get more tunes. But for fans, the disc will show you the real faces behind the voices of the show, and have a chance to enjoy some new live versions of your favorite songs.

- Tom Mitchell

[illegible]

DIRTY PAIR FLIGHT 005 CONSPIRACY SOUNDTRACK – LOVE SONGS COMPACT DISC  
(STAR CHILD/KING RECORDS, KIKA 2, 3,000 YEN)

The new Dirty Pair FLIGHT 005 CONSPIRACY OAV has yielded a wonderful soundtrack album that presents the listener with something new for a DP soundtrack album...ROCK & ROLL! The hard edged OAV needed a tougher sound and gets it with this soundtrack album.

The album is a nice change of pace to the open, sometimes cheaply produced pop sound of previous Dirty Pair soundtrack efforts. The album contains a handful of really well done pop songs ranging from a sad ballad (KUCHIZUKE – LOVER'S WARM) to kick-butt rock (WHAT DO YOU WANT?). All of the songs tainted with sadness and regret. A more serious tone musically than what we are used to. The rest of the album is instrumental BGM from key scenes in the film. Mostly slick and catchy synth work, and probably the nicest done for a Dirty Pair film so far.

This is an excellent soundtrack effort for the Pair. And its harder edge and more careful individualistic production is a nice change of pace. Highly recommended for fans. Oh, and don't forget to check out the CD itself...it features a great silkscreened full color graphic of the pair inviting you to take the disc for a spin!

– Tom Mitchell

DIRTY PAIR CD SINGLE – RUSSIAN ROULETTE/SPACE FANTASY (EASTWORLD/EMI RECORDS, XT10-2296, 937 YEN)

As the title says, this CD single contains the opening and closing themes from the soundtrack of the Dirty Pair TV series. Sung by Meiko Nakahara, RUSSIAN ROULETTE, and SPACE FANTASY are bouncy pop tunes with almost rap like rhythm in the lyrics that perfectly framed the opening and closing titles for the TV show.

Meiko Nakahara seems to have a fine voice, and handles some of the high notes in the song rather well. (Unlike most Japanese idol singers who might do a project like this.) The songs as they are presented here are much longer than the versions used in the credits for the show, so they feature some extra lyrics and some nice instrumental passages. It makes this short little two song CD3 a nice value.

Aside from the disturbing cover picture of Nakahara-san holding a revolver to her temple, my only complaint with the CD is its sound. The sound is very compressed and does not feature a lot of dynamic range. In fact, it really just sounds like a very good stereo television broadcast. Fortunately, the toe-tapping Dirty Pair TV themes are worth having despite the sound quality of the disc.

– Tom Mitchell

DIRTY PAIR OAV SERIES ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK MINI-ALBUM (VAP RECORDS, 22004-15, 1,401 YEN)

This little disc is the soundtrack to the Dirty Pair OAV series. Yes, I mean little! It's the only soundtrack album release that I can think of for a major anime that was released on a CD-Single (CD-3). Fortunately, the record makes good use of just about all of it's 20 minute length.

The album features the opening and closing themes to the OAV, with extra music and lyrics. I particularly love the snappy opening theme called BY YOURSELF. And there is more of it to love here. There are a total of nine tracks on the album. Eight of them contain all the major new bits of music that were created for the OAV series. Track 8 is a special treat for DP fans...It features a bunch of recorded messages from the Dirty Pair for use on telephone answering machines! Hahah! My only regret is that they don't have one with Mugi answering the phone.

The sound quality on this disc is excellent. Although the instrumental sound of the new music for the OAV is a bit sparse, the opening and closing themes have a very lush production sound to them. A nifty little disc that is about as much fun as you can have with a little 3" piece of acrylic and aluminum.

– Tom Mitchell

BUBBLEGUM CRISIS 7: DOUBLE VISION CD (Toshiba/EMI #TYCY-5126, Y3,000)

Those of you who are looking for another Bubblegum Crisis soundtrack

in  
the tradition of earlier albums (e.g. BGC #1) with some upbeat rock  
songs,  
you won't like this CD! The Bubblegum Crisis 7 CD is somewhat like  
the  
BGC 6 CD, complete with "squeaky idol singers". I can tolerate these  
type  
of songs (and even \*like\* some of them!), but I felt that the ones  
that  
appear on this CD just won't do. As for the BGM, it is reminiscent of  
past BGC CDs, with that futuristic genre of synthesized music. The  
only  
vocals that I like from this CD are: "Say, Yes!", "Here In the Dark",  
and  
"Never the End". Maybe in the CDs to come, they'll go back to the same  
kind of music along the lines of the first few BGC CDs put out. I'd  
hate  
to hear a BGC where they have nothing \*but\* idol singer type music!

– Patrick Minyard

With the release of the Bubblegum Crisis 7 – Double Vision soundtrack  
we  
are greeted with a continued slide in the quality of BGC music.  
Fortunately the damage wasn't as bad this time as the album has left  
us  
with two very good pop tunes that appear in this latest BGC OAV  
episode.

The BGC 7 soundtrack continues the trend of bubblegummy pop music  
filler  
that first appeared with the BGC 6 soundtrack. Soundtrack volumes 1  
through 5 featured rock songs and instrumentals that provided much of  
the  
atmosphere for the OAV. The music on these albums were among the best  
done  
ever done for any anime...OAV or otherwise. But, for whatever reason,  
it  
seemed the well had run dry with volume 6. Only half of that album  
music  
appeared in the video, and the rest was a selection of terrible  
throwaway  
pop-tunes used to pad out the rest of the album. In my review of the  
album  
I said that the soundtrack for BGC 7 would confirm if the BGC 6 music  
was  
a fluke or some terrible new direction that the music of Bubblegum  
Crisis  
would follow.

The BGC 7 soundtrack would seem to confirm the fact that we are on the road to pop-music hell. What next? New Kids on the Buma? Well, at least this album is not nearly as bad as the last one. I enjoyed the instrumentals used in the latest OAV. And the two songs NEVER THE END and SAY YES that are sung by the character Vision in the OAV are really hot pop tunes! BGC can produce great pop songs when it wants too. Unfortunately the rest of the album is again padded out with throw-away pop songs again.

I enjoyed this album a lot more than the last thanks to the songs NEVER THE END and SAY YES. And the new instrumentals stood out a little better this time as they weren't totally spoiled by the bad pop as much as on the BGC 6 soundtrack. This is not a great album...it's really only one for the fans of the show to collect...but it's a little better than the last time out.

- Tom Mitchell

PATLABOR CD VOLUME 5 - "INQUEST" : PATLABOR THE MOVIE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK  
(WARNER-PIONEER, 29L2-94, 2,900 YEN)

Basically an extremely well recorded album of high-tech synthesizer themes. Moody, bubbly, and gurgling. Kenji Kawai's music manages to suit the mood for all of the major scenes in the brooding and action-filled PATLABOR MOVIE. In a movie about computers and robots, his clean and precise themes suit the film well. But unless you, like me, are a sucker for well recorded and repetitive synthesizer music, you may find this album a little vapid. The music suited the film well, but may not hold up for listening on it's own for everyone. The best themes from the movie are probably the music for the opening action scenes and the haunting music for the scenes featuring the detective's investigations in to some Tokyo slums. Those themes are represented here in all their thumping and clanging digital glory.

- Tom Mitchell

#### VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU BGM COMPACT DISC (PONY CAMYON D28G0087)

In his Vampire Princess Miyu OAV series, Hirano created a disturbing tale of dark dreams and darker spirits. The background music that was integral in creating this eerie atmosphere has been gathered upon a single compact disc, providing nineteen tracks of softly haunting music. Collected from all four Vampire Princess Miyu volumes, this disc provides forty-five minutes of music, and is an excellent supplement to the video series.

Almost entirely instrumental, the music for the main part is a duet of graceful piano and mysterious synthesizers. The spirit world opening theme sets the mood for the entire disc: quiet and mysterious. And yet within that range there is a great diversity of tempo, style, and theme. The soft tracks are haunting, the driving tracks are downright threatening, and even the brightest pieces serving but to counterpoint, to emphasize the darker nature of the music. And while the arrangements run the gamut from lush to lonely, the music never fails to have a full sound, filling the room, be it a simple keyboard solo or the haunting tones of traditional theatre. Even the brighter songs are laced with darkness, and the prettiest ones forshadowing tragedy.

There is a surprise, however, in this collection. Track eighteen is the end theme for the Vampire Princess Miyu series, perhaps the jazziest and most upbeat piece on the disc. Track nineteen is a repeat of this theme. But with the vocals included. Never heard in the video series, it is an nice addition to the music. For those interested, the score and words for this track are included in Anime V's OAV Hit Song Collection'89.

The presentation of this compact disc is well crafted. The jewel box booklet includes perhaps two of the best stills of Miyu and Laba. And the back cover is an original soft and mysterious portrait of the Princess

and  
her Companion.

As background music, the themes from Vampire Princess Miyu served to accent the mysterious and shadowed nature of Hirano's tales. Quietly disturbingly, they were a well integrated facet of the four films.

Alone,  
they stand surprisingly well, creating three quarters of an hour of dark,  
depressing, threatening and haunting music. Very pretty, but almost  
always  
a touch sad. And very recommended for those who enjoyed Vampire  
Princess  
Miyu.

-Mike Naylor

CLEOPATRA D.C. ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK COMPACT DISC (FUTURELAND RECORDS,  
LD32-5097, 3,200 YEN)

Piano, bass, sax...Jazz! What better sounds than a slick Jazz combo to  
illustrate Cleopatra's overly romantic view of a bustling and  
cosmopolitan New York City that...like America's interest in  
Jazz...never

really was quite there. This album features soundtrack music from the  
action-comedy spoof OAV series Cleopatra D.C. The music has a pleasing  
Jazz combo sound that is so smooth that you could even use the action  
tunes as the background music to a formal dinner party. The music is  
pleasing, yet lively enough to be relaxing without putting you to  
sleep.

Aside from the neat Jazz BGM, the notable highlight of the album are  
the

vocals. First off, all the songs on the album are in English. The  
vocals

are in a somewhat Japanese (?) accent and sung by a woman named Diane  
Silverthorn. With that accent, I wonder if that is her real name.

Anyway,  
her singing is pretty good, but it's the song lyrics that sound really  
strange. The songs feature lyrics that pull rhymes from all the  
hardest

places..."Now I know what the word charisma means. Everybody wants to  
be a

part of her scene." They are almost like "Japanglish", yet they make  
sense. And the shameful thing about them is that you will soon find  
yourself singing along.

I really enjoyed this album. Although, I would only recommend it if  
you  
appreciate good Jazz instrumentals, as I have heard other fans say



that  
they found the album disappointing. The only thing I was disappointed with was the fact that not all of the BGM from the 2 OAV episodes this album covers were not present. All the major themes are here, but there  
are few minor ones that I enjoyed too. Although, they were more in a rock  
& roll vein. So perhaps they were not included so as not to interfere with the album's Jazz theme.

– Tom Mitchell

TOP O NARAE – GUNBUSTER SOUNDTRACK COMPACT DISC (VICTOR RECORDS, VDR-1601, 3,000 YEN)

The soundtrack CD to the 6 part OAV series TOP O NARAE – GUNBUSTER has got to be one of the more unusual anime soundtrack albums created to date. The first thing you notice about the CD when you put in the player  
is the running time. This CD is LONG! Over 77 minutes! I've never seen a  
CD run so long. That's really pushing past the rated limit of running time on the CD format. But improved mastering techniques today allow folks to squeeze a little more running time out of the discs. And this title certainly takes advantage of it.

Running time aside, it's what's on the disc that matters of course. Subtitled "Victor Manga Golden Special", this is more than just soundtrack album. With it's 99 tracks, this CD is more of an interactive  
audio playground. Not only does this CD contain 22 tracks of BGM, and the  
opening and closing themes songs from the Gunbuster OAV, but it also contains an original image song, 2 original Gunbuster audio dramas, 2 character message spots for the show, and an interactive collection of 69  
character dialog snippets that will allow you to create your own silly Gunbuster dialogs. Hit random play on your CD player for a really wild presentation!

This is quite an album. Oh, and the music is good too. The soundtrack to  
Gunbuster features some snappy pop tunes from the opening and closing titles. Much longer cuts of them than were used in the OAVs. And the background music for the OAV boasts a pompous "big adventure"  
synthesized  
full orchestra sound that is quite stirring at times. Very well  
composed  
and recorded. Perhaps the only disappointing thing about the album is that

most of the major scores from the final episode are missing. We could have done without much of the extras here to fit them in. I don't know why they would choose not to select those important closing themes for this album.

On top of all this, the album graphics also feature artwork that pay homage to the sensational Japanese promotional art from 20 years ago, and a silly picture CD in a clear case. All in all, this is not just a soundtrack album...it's an adventure!

– Tom Mitchell

KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE – ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK CD (ANIMAGE RECORDS, 32ATC-184, 3,008 YEN)

Another great Joe Hisaishi album for another great Hayao Miyazaki film. Probably the most notable thing about this album is that it boasts a very lush, full orchestra sound. Hisaishi pretty much left his synthesizers and drum machines home for the entire album, and instead concentrates almost entirely on full the orchestra and highlighting some individual acoustic instruments. Since the Kiki's was a quiet and non-violent adventure film, this affects the music too. The whole album is lush and mellow, pretty much devoid of even one pulse pounding Hisaishi action theme that Hisaishi likes to break things up with when the going gets easy.

So, this is probably one of Hisaishi's best "easy listening" soundtracks.

Sort of a nice change of pace to hear him working so well with a full orchestra. As usual, his music and Miyazaki's vision suit each other well. Oh, and check out track 18! Joe has hidden a lot of themes from his past movie compositions in this tune...So far I've been able to pick out movements from Arion, Nausicaa, and Laputa. Also, the two wonderful pop tunes from the movie are also present as "bonus tracks" at the end of the CD.

– Tom Mitchell

SOL BIANCA SOUNDTRACK – "Oogon No Uchuusen" ("Spaceship of Gold") \*  
NEC Avenue # N29C-43 \* Y3,008 \* Approx. 48 minutes

My first reaction upon listening to this CD was "wow, nice soundtrack!"  
The CD starts out with a synthesized tune called "The Grandeur of View", which is only just one song of many that do this CD justice. The second song, "Born Again", is a lively rock instrumental. Upon hearing the third song, "Ladyship", it threw me for a loop! It sounds like an easy-listening tune and would confuse people as to why they put in on the CD. It definitely sounds out of place, but until you see the movie, you won't know what part this song plays (no pun intended! – grin). The first vocal song on the CD is the fourth song titled "Everlasting Dream". My only gripe about this song is the singer. Her voice sounds a little on the rough side. Who knows, maybe after listening to her sing 20 – 30 times, I \*might\* get used to it. Now for the song I liked the most on the CD... "Circle of Life" is the fifth song and it is a synthesized instrumental. It's a relatively simple piece, but after I heard the first 10 seconds of the song, I knew I'd like it! The sixth song, titled "Cloudy Eyes", is perhaps a "mild" rock song. I'd say it almost ranks up there with "Circle of Life" as far as listening pleasure goes. The next song is called "Roundtrip" and I'd say it's the best rock instrumental. It has an up-beat tempo with guitar solo or two. The next vocal song on this CD is "Reflection". It has a rock beat to it and it's very catchy tune! "We Can Fly" is the last instrumental on the CD. This song is not like the other instrumentals, since they used more accoustic instruments rather than synthesizers. Even so, it is still a nice tune. The last song on the CD is called "Makenai de". It's a mellow rock song and it seems to have quite a bit of feeling put into it by the singer (that's more than I can say about many other songs I've heard!). Well, all in all, I feel

that the Sol Bianca Soundtrack is a worthwhile CD and on a scale of 1 to 10, I'd rate it with a score of 9!

– Patrick Minyard

MEGAZONE 23 PART III ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK COMPACT DISC (VICTOR, VDR-1629, 3,200 YEN)

High-tech, moody, slick, and atmospheric, the soundtrack to the 3rd and latest installment of the Megazone 23 OAV series delivers with sound what the video could not; a dramatic adventure in a cyberspace world.

My favorite soundtrack album of the past year, this CD is the best thing to come out of the latest Megazone 23 project. The story of Megazone 23 Part III is set some 200 years after the first two videos. It is a different world with a new cast of characters. And the music reflects this. Gone are the tight rock and roll sounds of Tokyo 23 that reigned over the first two now classic soundtrack albums. The sound now reflects the new era of the recording engineer as artist...the "sound architect."

Sound architect Keishi Urata has taken the compositions of various artists and orchestrated them into a carefully constructed sonic environment. It is a dark and dreamy high-tech world that suggests the new Megazone's story of a gleaming city and its dark inner workings that are explored by young computer hackers submerged in its computer generated cyberspace interfaces and running wild on the city's too clean real-world streets.

Listening to the music, you get a sense of what the dreamy visions of mind to computer interfacing must be like. This is the music of an electronic dream. You wake every once in a while to superb pop tunes by Saki Takaoka, only to be plunged back into the digital dreamworld of the cyberspace computer hacker.

This is a state of the art digital recording. Rather than the rock and roll that was used to illustrate the motorcycle gangs of the first two Megazone films, the music here uses dreamy but percussive, almost

avant  
garde, digitally sampled synthesizer compositions to illustrate  
computer  
dominated society. This is quite a change from the sounds of the first  
two  
Megazone 23 videos, and I can see how some fans may not like it.  
Although  
the pop songs on the new album are similar in style to those of the  
first  
videos, but show off even slicker production values and a greater  
range of  
instrumentation. Two hundred years later, and EVE still sounds great.

The CD itself is packaged in a very attractive clear cast that shows  
off  
the disc's post-80's modern graphic design work. The CD booklet is a  
very  
attractive presentation of stills from the videos, with production  
crew  
credits in English, and Japanese lyrics to the songs. The CD sports a  
neat  
color graphic with the Megazone 23 III logo and a color graphic by  
Hiroyuki Kitazume, the character designer for this video. The middle  
of  
the CD also contains an interesting 12 minute audio drama with the  
cast of  
MZ23 III called "ANOTHER STORY OF MEGAZONE." (With motorcycle sounds  
sampled from the Disney film TRON...)

A great album of modern electronic music, that is very daringly  
different from the previous soundtracks. It tells the story of  
Megazone 23  
better than the new videos themselves.

[I should also note that this was one of the few times I heard an  
anime  
soundtrack before seeing the film. After seeing the Megazone 23 III  
OAVs,  
I should also note that this album is missing a 2 or three themes heard  
in  
the OAV and the wonderful heavy metal song heard during Eji's party is  
also missing. This is not unusual for a Megazone 23 soundtrack though;  
the  
other MZ23 OAVs also had music in them that did not make it onto the  
soundtrack albums. They would show up later on a rare EP called  
MEGAZONE  
23 MANIAC LIBRARY COLLECTION.]

- Tom Mitchell



ISBN4-89189-481-4  
C0076 P2000E, 2,000 YEN, 8 1/4" X 11 1/2")

This wonderful B-CLUB SPECIAL book is a volume that any Kenichi Sonoda or Bubblegum Crisis collector shouldn't be without. KENICHI SONODA - VISION is a deluxe collection of promotional art by ARTMIC/AIC artist Kenichi Sonoda. The book focuses mainly on Kenichi's slick promotional art for the OAV series Bubblegum Crisis. It collects his art done for posters, audio and video software covers, Bubblegum Crisis novels, and special promotional art and rejected ideas. VISION also presents early design concepts for the Knight Sabers' hard suits...some interesting rejected ideas here! The book covers BGC art right up to Bubblegum Crisis 7, so it is very current.

Although the book is mainly devoted to BGC, there are also special art sections on the one-shot OAV Riding Bean, and a few examples of original art ideas that have not been developed. (Who knows, one day we may see an OAV called GUN SMITH CATS!) There is also a nice text section discussing Sonoda and his art and the short history of his 28 year old life. Sorry, no Gallforce discussed here, though.

The creative design force behind hit ARTMIC/AIC shows like Gallforce and Bubblegum Crisis, Kenichi Sonoda has a very distinctive style that has virtually dominated almost all of the studio's works. He combines a clean, highly detailed eye for design with a slick, streamlined view of female anatomy and meticulous technical detail. I can think of no other anime artist that quite resembles his style. And a book like this really shows off his work to its best advantage.

The book itself is a large, glossy, full color publication throughout most all of its 112 pages. All of the illustrations are noted with easy to read (if you read Japanese) notations on what the illustrations were from and how they were originally used. Bandai has done a superb job with this book! I highly recommend it, although of course it does not tell the entire story of Sonoda's career. If you are a BGC fan, this book should satisfy you. If you are a Sonoda fan, you will find that this book combined with B-CLUB's ARTMIC DESIGN WORKS BOOK would make a perfect

set

as the Design Works book presents an overall view of some of Sonoda's other projects.

– Tom Mitchell

B-CLUB SPECIAL – MEGAZONE 23 PERFECT DATA BOOK

ISBN4-89189-476-8

Y2000

As the title states, this book is a great reference of all the Megazone 23 OAVs. The following paragraphs will attempt to describe the contents of the Megazone Perfect Data Book.

The first sections, titled "Film Memory/Film Story", describe the plot and storyline of the first two Megazone 23 OAVs complete with film clips from the major scenes.

The next part, "Megazone 23 I:120% Megafire", has the character designs for Eve, Shogo, Yui and other characters. Also in this section are the mechanical designs for the Garland, Hargun and other mecha that appear in the OAV.

Next, there is an interesting article, complete with design sheets, on "Vanity City". "Vanity City" appears to be a predecessor to Megazone 23.

The character designs did not change much between Vanity City and the Megazone OAVs. The mecha, on the other hand, are much more varied.

In the Megazone OAV, there were basically two major designs, the Garland and the Hargun.

In the Vanity City sketches, there are designs for power-suits, a tank, various flying vehicles. And if I'm not mistaken, some of these designs resemble mecha from the Macross, and Genesis Climber Mospedea series.

The various real locations of Tokyo animated in Megazone parts 1&2 are presented in the "Real City 23" section.

Next comes the character and mecha designs for the second Megazone OAV.

Included in this section are some pre-production color sketches. Also



present are some Megazone illustrations done by artists such as H. Mikimoto, T. Hirano and S. Aramaki.

The origins of the Megazone ships are detailed in the "Megazone: Illustrated Story" chapter. Although the meat of the story in Japanese, the illustrations are help a little. It's interesting to note that Megazone 1 is supposed to be New York City(The Big Apple) in the 1950's.

For modeling fans, photographs of the Original, E=X, and Proto Garland mechas in soft vinyl are provided. In the closing chapters, the character and mecha designs for the third Megazone OAV are presented. Along with interviews with the voice actors and actresses of Megazone 23 part 3. If you a Megazone 23 fan, this book will make a great reference and should provide some insight on how the Megazone OAV series came about.

– Albert Wong

B-CLUB SPECIAL MOOKS: AKEMI TAKADA ARTBOOK 1 – COMPLETE VISUAL WORKS (ISBN4-89189-375-3 C0076 P1854E, 1,854 YEN) AKEMI TAKADA ARTBOOK 2 – CRYSTELLA (ISBN4-89189-331-1 C0076 P1854E, 1,854 YEN)

Like many new fans, I discovered Akemi Takada's lush pastel artwork through her work on the recent hit shows KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD and PATLABOR

– THE MOBILE POLICE. One of the most popular female anime artists and character designers in anime today, her style is unique and very easy to spot once your are familiar with her art. I began to notice her work in other past projects, and wanted to learn more about here and some other other things she had worked on. In comes B-CLUB to the rescue with the publication of two new art "mooks" (Magazine-like books) that provide both a biographical look at Akemi, and a lush presentation of her pre-Orange Road work.

The large glossy paper back books present her wonderful pastel paintings and characters designs in full color. Each book ends with interviews, and monochrome art, and comics that Akemi uses to poke fun at her daily life

and friends. Keep in mind that there are just a couple rare pre-production Orange Road sketches in book two, and no Patlabor art in either book. These books are purely a look back at her previous work.

The books present original and promotional art by Akemi for some of the earlier shows she worked on, with a focus on art from CREAMY MAMI, TWILIGHT Q, and ending with 1987's URBAN SQUARE. The books also touch on some of Akemi's original art, and art done for novels, plus provide detailed looks into how Akemi work's and some of the art techniques she uses.

Unless you are into the art itself, Orange Road and Patlabor fans might not find these books very interesting. But, I recommend these books highly to any die-hard Akemi Takada fan, or art student who would like to see some vivid, careful, and unique human figure pastel art. You are in for quite a visual trip.

- Tom Mitchell

#### ARTMIC MOVIE BOOK - RHEA GALL FORCE

All you ever needed to know about the Rhea Gallforce video series, this 73 page book has it all. The book is divided up into eight major sections.

The first section, 'Digest Film' is the only color segment in the book. It is a pictorial of the first Rhea Gallforce OAV. The next section called 'Design Board: Preparatory' contains pre-production sketches. Included are preliminary sketches of Sandy, Nortone the cyborg and the MME(Man Made Existence). The third section contains sketches and illustrations of the major and minor character in the Rhea Gallforce OAV.

Next comes the designs for the mechanics. Here, you'll find sketches of the West's sleek six-wheeled tank, the East's hovercrafts, various weapons. Also included is a plan view of the space shuttle used during the end of the OAV. The fifth section contains sketches of the MME troopers and ships. The 'Design Book:Art' section has sketches of the many backgrounds used in the OAV. The seventh section, 'Design Book:Plan' appears to have a brief history of the MME. The last section lists

the  
staff and cast of Rhea Gallforce. Overall a good reference book for  
the  
Rhea Gallforce OAV.

– Albert Wong

YOSHITAKA AMANO MATEN C0071	ISBN4-257-03185-9
YOSHITAKA AMANO HITEN C0071	ISBN4-257-03229-4
YOSHITAKA AMANO GENMUKY C0071	ISBN4-403-01029-6

There are very few people who would not agree that Vampire Hunter D is an excellent film. Especially considering the artistry of the characters:

Doris, the monsters, and especially Lamika and the mysterious D. What is less well known is that these designs are a mere shade of the excellence of Yoshitaka Amano's work. Here is an artist whose ability to capture hauntingly dark sensual images is perhaps unequaled.

A large portion of Amano's work has been published in these three books.

The first two, Maten and Hiten, are softbound companion volumes, each filled cover to cover, with works of acrylic, watercolours, and pen and ink. The third book, Genmuky, is a small hardcover, yet equally well packed with Amano's art. In general, all three books follow the same manner of organization. The first section of each book is a large series of colour plates, which is then followed up with a selection of Amano's striking black on white drawings. And last, a text section, in Japanese, commenting on the art presented. Together, the three books contain almost two hundred examples of Yoshitaka Amano's skill of portraying persons of mystery and darkness.

And of the artistry which fills these books...

The majority of Amano's work is portraiture and of the human form. And yet beyond simple technical expertise, he is able to capture a moment, a

mood, an atmosphere. Always eerie and mysterious, it is most often a darkly sensual image he creates. And Amano's work often steps beyond the sensual, into sleek eroticism. His ladies are fine and mysterious, some slender, almost androgynous. Yet undeniably female. Others possess a more traditionally form filling figure. His men are strong, dark and vibrant. Amano's faeries harken back to older tales, when they were fell creatures of rare beauty. And throughout each book, there is a series of portraits of the vampire hunter "D". Elegantly haunting, "D" can now be seen illustrated far more richly than when animated.

Amano's style is unique. It is lush and rich, with exquisite linework and filled with pattern and texture. His handling of colour is dense; subtle tones and shading creating a full and lavish image. And yet, elsewhere, this quiet use is matched with vibrant, often highlighting a softer portrait, or used to shock and draw attention. Sensual elegance is perhaps the best way to describe his work. At its heart, his style often seems to draw from an older, almost art deco foundation. Amano's work is in many cases reminiscent of Gustav Klimt and the Succession period artists, especially his use of pattern and background and theme. Then, of course, there is the black world of Amano. For he handles the lack of colour with equal skill. His black and white drawings are strong, striking, and sharp. And once again, he works in opposite extremes, from fine linework providing texture and fullness, to bold high contrast images.

Save for Vampire Hunter D, and a few other related drawings, perhaps there is only a tenuous relationship between the majority of Amano's work and anime. So be it. Amano's work is definitely worth experiencing, no matter what the excuse. These three books will be an excellent addition to most any library, and I highly recommend both them and Yoshitaka Amano's art.

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After notes:

For those who follow Yoshitaka Amano, there is also a fourth volume of his work available. "Imagine" (ISBN4-403-01031-8 C0071) is a softbound collection of colour plates, black and white drawings, and pencil sketches. This collection has a good sampling of his early work, including strip art and anime work.

Posters and prints can be acquired through Norman Hood of Chimera Publishing. He has managed to acquire a limited selection of Amano posters, and has also cannibalized a fair number of limited edition calendar prints, which have been matted and mounted.

- Mike Naylor

APPLESEED DATA BOOK BY SHIROW MASAMUNE (PUBLISHED BY COMIC BORNE, 880 YEN , ISBN4-915333-69-8 C0079 P880E)

This book is a new guide to the world Shirow Masamune has created for his SF adventure manga APPLESEED. It's a bible of information for the APPLESEED fan , covering all major aspects of the manga story. As the cover of the book lists, the Data Book comes with political maps of Earth, an Appleseed Encyclopedia, data on individual countries and governments, a historical chronology, character profiles, mecha specs, and last but not least, an original Appleseed short story "CALLED GAME." There are also some interviews and essays with Shirow explaining some of his ideas in some of the sections.

Appleseed book 5 is due out sometime next year. Its release is being held up by Shirow who in the meantime is starting a new manga story called ORION. So this book should hold the appetites of Appleseed fans who have been waiting for the new volume. It'll give you a deeper look into the Appleseed world, and perhaps provide readers with information and details that might have been overlooked. Other than the short manga story and the neat cover, most of the art in the book is reprinted from past volumes of the manga. Although, there are a few new Shirow drawings and cartoons scattered throughout the book.

The APPLESEED DATA BOOK is a must-have publication for all APPLESEED readers and Shirow collectors. I hope that we see an English translation

- Tom Mitchell

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I hope everyone has a good holiday season. We have a lot of new things to talk about in the next issue. (A lot of stuff that didn't fit in this issue too. We didn't want to make this issue T00 big.) Also be sure and check out the new Sony Super Price editions of VAMPIRE HUNTER D and GALL FORCE. These new editions of the videos are being sold at half price (disc & tape) and nothing has been cut out. I'll be comparing the new editions with the old ones in the next issue.

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